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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 003015

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FOR INR/B

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: GOMBE STATE BIOGRAPHIC REPORTING

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER FOR REASON 1.5  
(B).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Governor Alhaji Abubakar Habu Hashidu is a key power broker in Northeast Nigeria. Deputy Governor Joshua M. Lidani is an intelligent technocrat; a Christian who balances Gombe State's Muslim-dominated government. The Emir of Gombe Alhaji Shehu Usman Abubakar remains an important and influential Northeast Nigerian Islamic leader. END SUMMARY

2. (C) Gombe State Governor Alhaji Abubakar Habu Hashidu is a popular political figure who has managed to maintain good ties with both the Northern power elite and the Obasanjo Administration. He is one of a number of northern career civil servants who joined politics after retirement. An US-educated agricultural specialist, Hashidu won the gubernatorial seat in 1999 under the All Peoples' Party (APP) ticket, beating his friend and colleague, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Ambassador Yerima Abdullahi. Because of the influence of former Head of State Babangida and others in the Northern political elite, the Governor and several other APP governors then quietly swung their states' support behind President Obasanjo in the 1999 presidential election. Hashidu was a member of the Vision 2010 Committee during the Sani Abacha regime (1993-1998) and served as Chairman of the Presidential Task Force on Grain Distribution. The Governor was Secretary for the Movement for the Creation of Gombe State, which was carved out of Bauchi State in 1996, and served as Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources under the Babangida regime (1988-1993). He earlier served as Permanent Secretary and Commissioner in Bauchi State. The

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Governor also served as Chief Agricultural Officer, Assistant General Manager and later General Manager, Upper Benue River Basin from 1977 to 1980. He worked at Kainji Dam and Biu in Borno State as an Agricultural Officer in the 1970s.

3. (C) Hashidu attended a three-month advanced management course at the University of Pittsburgh in 1975. Hashidu received his BS in Agricultural Science from Missouri's Lincoln University (1965-69) and attended summer courses at Utah State University (1967) and the University of New Hampshire (1966). The Governor studied at Nigeria's Ahmadu Bello University (1964) in Zaria. Born in 1944 in Dukku, the Governor holds the traditional title of Muttawali of Dukku. Hashidu, a Muslim and ethnic Fulani, is married to Aishatu Abubakar. The Governor has three sons and three daughters. He speaks excellent English, Hausa, and Fulani. (COMMENT: The politically savvy and sophisticated Hashidu is an earnest and engaging interlocutor. The Governor is frank and well spoken. During 3-plus years in office, Hashidu has given Gombe's citizens improved drinking water and security for rural residents, particularly the farmers who were for years subjected to the armed cattle raiders and banditry emanating from marauding gangs. Hashidu, an excellent political strategist, has stunted PDP (Nigeria's ruling party, dominant among Gombe's elite) aspirations to unseat him in elections slated for 2003, by sticking to populist grassroots projects, such as improving infrastructure and rural security. The Governor is a good friend and supporter of Babaginda. He is also well disposed to the United States. END COMMENT)

4. (C) Deputy Governor Joshua M. Lidani, an intelligent and successful lawyer, likely keeps his post because Governor Hashidu needs a Christian to politically balance his Muslim-dominated state

government. However, a Christian is much less of a potential rival to Hashidu. (COMMENT: During a 75-minute meeting with the Ambassador and the Governor in early October 2002, Lidani said nothing, but appeared to have the Governor's confidence. Embassy sources report that Lidani is not a power broker in the Gombe State Government, but is an influential leader in the minority Christian community (30% of Gombe State); he has also donated money for new church construction and Christian schools for the handicapped. In private discussions with Econoff, Lidani was professional and friendly. Born in Kaltungo, Lidani is married and speaks excellent English and several African languages. END COMMENT)

15. (C) His Highness the Emir of Gombe Alhaji Shehu Usman Abubakar is one of the most influential Muslim leaders in Northeast Nigeria. The Emir, who assumed the throne in 1986, is Chairman of Gombe State Council of Chiefs. The Emir supported Governor Hashidu's (1999-present) chief opponent in 1999, the PDP candidate and present Nigerian Ambassador to Malaysia Yerima Abdullahi, who is married to one of the Emir's daughters. Before his appointment as Emir, Abubakar was a career civil servant in former Bauchi State. The Emir speaks English well, Hausa and Fulani. He has four wives and many children. (COMMENT: Abubakar is an open and engaging man. He is not a stickler for protocol and welcomes visits by US officials. During a meeting with Ambassador Jeter, the Emir spoke fondly of a visit by former President Bush's son Neil to the Emir's palace several years ago. His Highness is a horse aficionado, with a stable of over sixty, mainly South American, horses. END COMMENT)

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